

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
CIVIL MINUTES - GENERAL

Case No.	CV 15-5278 PA (AJWx)	Date	July 21, 2015
Title	Caribbean Boy Investments, LLC v. Diane Pappas		

Present: The Honorable	PERCY ANDERSON, UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE		
Stephen Montes Kerr	Not Reported		N/A
Deputy Clerk	Court Reporter		Tape No.
Attorneys Present for Plaintiff:		Attorneys Present for Defendants:	
None		None	

Proceedings: IN CHAMBERS - COURT ORDER

The Court is in receipt of a Notice of Removal filed by defendant Diane Pappas ("Defendant"), on July 14, 2015. In its Complaint, plaintiff Caribbean Boy Investments, LLC ("Plaintiff") alleges a single state law claim for unlawful detainer. Defendant, who is appearing pro se, asserts that this Court has subject matter jurisdiction on the basis of federal question jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331.

Federal courts are of limited jurisdiction, having subject matter jurisdiction only over matters authorized by the Constitution and Congress. See, e.g., Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co., 511 U.S. 375, 377, 114 S. Ct. 1673, 1675, 128 L. Ed. 2d 391 (1994). A "strong presumption" against removal jurisdiction exists. Gaus v. Miles, Inc., 980 F.2d 564, 567 (9th Cir. 1992). In seeking removal, the defendant bears the burden of proving that jurisdiction exists. Scott v. Breeland, 792 F.2d 925, 927 (9th Cir. 1986).

Under 28 U.S.C. § 1331, this Court has original jurisdiction over civil actions "arising under" federal law. Removal based on § 1331 is governed by the "well-pleaded complaint" rule. Caterpillar, Inc. v. Williams, 482 U.S. 386, 392, 107 S. Ct. 2425, 2429, 96 L. Ed. 2d 318 (1987). Under the rule, "federal jurisdiction exists only when a federal question is presented on the face of plaintiff's properly pleaded complaint." Id. at 392, 107 S. Ct. at 2429, 96 L. Ed. 2d 318. If the complaint does not specify whether a claim is based on federal or state law, it is a claim "arising under" federal law only if it is "clear" that it raises a federal question. Duncan v. Stuetzle, 76 F.3d 1480, 1485 (9th Cir. 1996). Thus, plaintiff is generally the "master of the claim." Caterpillar, 482 U.S. at 392, 107 S. Ct. at 2429, 96 L. Ed. 2d 318. "A case may not be removed to federal court on the basis of a federal defense, including the defense of pre-emption." Id. at 393, 107 S. Ct. at 2430, 96 L. Ed. 2d 318 (emphasis in original). The only exception to this rule is where plaintiff's federal claim has been disguised by "artful pleading," such as where the only claim is a federal one or is a state claim preempted by federal law. Sullivan v. First Affiliated Sec., Inc., 813 F.2d 1368, 1372 (9th Cir. 1987).

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Here, the underlying Complaint contains only a single cause of action for unlawful detainer. Defendant alleges that removal is proper because “Defendant filed an answer to the Complaint based on a defective notice, i.e. the Notice to Occupants to Vacate Premises failed to comply with the Tenants at Foreclosure Act.” The Answer does not appear to include any reference to this statute. Regardless, the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act (“PTFA”) does not create a private right of action; rather, it provides a defense to state law unlawful detainer actions. See Logan v. U.S. Bank Nat. Ass’n, 2013 WL 3614465, *1 (9th Cir. 2013) (affirming dismissal of the complaint because the PTFA “does not create a private right of action allowing [plaintiff] to enforce its requirements”). Therefore, Defendant’s allegations do not provide a proper basis for removal, as neither a federal defense nor an actual or anticipated federal counterclaim forms a basis for removal. See, e.g., Vaden v. Discover Bank, 556 U.S. 49, 61-62, 129 S. Ct. 1262, 1272, 173 L. Ed. 2d 206 (2009). Additionally, because the Complaint alleges only a state law claim for unlawful detainer, it does not present a claim “arising under” federal law.

For the foregoing reasons, Defendant has failed to meet her burden of showing that federal question jurisdiction exists over this action. Because the Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction, this action is hereby remanded to the Ventura Superior Court, Case No. 56-2015-00468657-CL-UD-VTA. See 28 U.S.C. § 1447(c).

IT IS SO ORDERED.

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